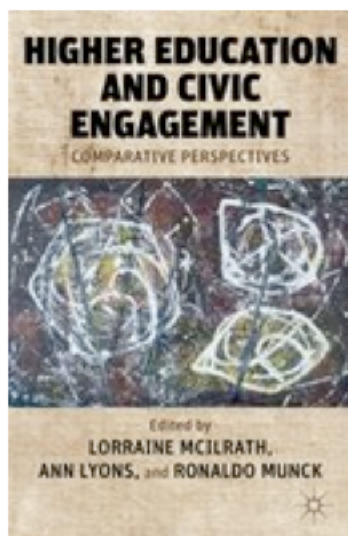


Higher Education and Civic Engagement: Comparative Perspectives - McIlrath, Lorraine; Lyons, Ann and Munck, Ronaldo (Eds.). Palgrave Macmillan, 2012

Web: <http://www.palgrave.com/products/TitlePrint.aspx?PID=545677>



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While there is a degree of narcissism as I recommend “Higher Education and Civic Engagement: Comparative Perspectives” as a classic on civic engagement and higher education, since I am one of three editors. However, I equally feel that the diversity of papers contained within this publication is both compelling and important to any scholar and practitioner within this field. A number of reviews are available at the web address given above. This is the most contemporary collection as Palgrave Macmillan published this book in July 2012. This book has become a classic for me within my own work for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is rare that we get a truly international voice on higher education and civic engagement, but this book contains contributions from the Middle East, South America, Australia, Africa, North America and Europe. It offers a global north and south dimensions on the role of higher education within society that can be at times contested but also complementary – there is much to learn and trade on. Given this global flavour, the papers

highlight the diversity of interpretations, practices and perspectives that exist in terms of this important work. The contributing authors represent an array of individuals engaged in the contract of exploring and pushing out of the boundaries between community and higher education – these include university leaders, administrators, community representatives, academics and a poet. It is a challenging book as it begs us to examine our theoretic underpinnings and practices in light of the diverse interpretations and perspectives.

The book is divided into three interrelated sections that move from the philosophical to the practical; and from the broad to the specific. Section I, “Context and Concepts”, addresses theoretical issues and the impact of current global market conditions in terms of embedding the civic mission. Section II, “Manifestations and Issues”, focuses on approaches, methods and relationships. While Section III, “Reflections on Practice”, explores examples of practices that readdress the imbalance of much of the civic engagement literature, which is still somewhat focussed in a North Atlantic view of the world. The contributing authors include Paul Manners from the Beacons for Public Engagement in the UK, Mounir Mabsout from the American University of Beirut, Brenda Gourley former VC of the Open University and Maria Nieves Tapia from CLAYSS in Argentina.

It has become my most recent source of solace and support – and I hope others can also gain from this pool of light!